The District in the XVIIIth Century;

THE DISTRICT IN THE XVIIITH CENTURY

HISTORY, SITE STRATEGY,REAL ESTATE MARKET, LANDSCAPE, &c.

AS DESCRIBED BY THE EARLIEST TRAVELLERS:

HENRY WANSEY, FRANCIS BAILY, ISAAC WELD,DUKE OF LA ROCHEFOUCAULD-LIANCOURT, JOHN DAVIS OF SALISBURY.

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PREFACE

Crèvecœur, in his ‘Letters of an American Farmer,’ (1787), is one of the few of the early travellers to mention except casually the importance of the system of water transportation in this country during the later eighteenth century. This writer, who manages through much sentimentality to bring out a great deal of hard sense, devotes a page or two to an enlargement upon the intricacy of the system of waterways in America used for the carriage of commodities. That world having almost entirely disappeared, it is interesting to follow the remarks of an observer who seems to have grasped the whole significance of what the usual traveller saw as sporadic phenomena. Crèvecœur speaks of the colonies as being knit with the ramifications of navigable ways—arms of the sea, large rivers, small rivers, creeks; the Atlantic slope floating down its produce to the ports whither came the ships bearing fabricated articles from Europe.*

* See also, *American Husbandry. Containing an Account of the Soil, Climate, Production, and Agriculture of the British Colonies,* &c.

By An American. London. 1775. p. 95 and p. 97.—“Nothing can be more fortunate than the navigation of the Ohio quite to the Apalachean mountains, at the back of the center of all our colonies, since by that means people may, with only a small or a moderate journey,

arrive at a navigation that will carry them through all that immense tract which we may in future colonize, a part of which we are now about to settle * * * * This immense inland navigation, which spreads far and near, from the Atlantic Ocean to the South Sea, and from the Gulph of Mexico to Hudson's Bay: the river Mississippi with its branches spread over most of it, and the lakes, with the St. Laurence, which are nearly connected with the former, go through the rest. It is of prodigious future consequence to be masters of this navigation, and to have early a power fixed on it, in order to overawe and keep the Spaniards from designs against our colonies."

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By the year 1775 certain adjustments had taken place in this sort of traffic, the conditions of which were the cause of the Revolution; after which change there was a disturbance of the methods established along the coast, and, besides, a necessity for new relations with the back country due to its extension beyond the mountains. However, the growth of towns being very Slow in a region of adventurous homesteaders exploring a fertile country, it is probably true, as stated by Isaac Weld, that in 1796 Winchester, (in the lower Valley of Virginia), was the largest town in America west of the Blue Ridge. The larger depots of the import and forwarding trade, as established by the year 1775, still continued in control of that market, but every day the Ohio and the Mississippi and their tributaries were becoming more considerable as channels of commerce, and there was a steady augmentation in the mass of raw material (staples) to be drawn from the Mississippi valley. Transportation being what it was, it is not surprising that there should have been an attempt made to found a new city which should at least be a more convenient forwarding station for European manufactures and might by its advantages of position attract a large share of the return trade from the West. Hence the idea of Washington, seat of the new government, and central point of exchange in the new commerce. Commercially, nobody could foresee the extraordinary expansion and initiative of the West after the Louisiana Purchase, and certainly in 1800 it was impossible to discount the appearance of the steamboat on the Ohio ten years later.

So, the pages following have been reproduced to show the expectations, arguments, methods, difficulties, and results of this great undertaking during the seven years before the District of Columbia became in fact the capital of the sixteen United States—where from the broad avenues of Washington, cut through the woods, glimpses might be had of the ‘towering steeples’ of the city of Alexandria. These five travellers were competent observers, and one of them, the Duke of La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, was able to pass upon evidence with a mind trained in the large affairs of the world. In his Page Seven account there is no factor of the matter overlooked. Wansey enters in his pocket book what he has been told at a coffee-house, Washington being merely hearsay at that time. In the description of John Davis there is a trace of the irresponsibility of copy-making, but the record is not without its value covering as it does the formal establishment, and the appearance of Thomas Jefferson on horseback.

It is noticeable in these pages that the man of the eighteenth century, (before the era of thoroughness through vicariousness), saw perhaps more than we do today. However, a world has been superimposed since then, and the relativities are a trifle obscured. No elucidation has been offered of such points as the question of Tiber Creek, and the identification of well-known names will be easily made.*

* A discussion of all these items is to be found in many books, e. g., Townsend's *Washington* or Forbes-Lindsay's recent book.

Alfred J. Morrison.

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Pennsylvania Packet & Daily Advertiser, Philadelphia, July 17, 1790: —

“Extract of a letter from New York dated July 15th, 3 o'clock P. M.—‘I have the pleasure of informing you of the President's signing the Residence Bill.’”

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THE DISTRICT IN THE XVIIITH CENTURY

“This was the sentiment that generally struck me most forcibly, as I travelled through the States—the appearance every where of a vast outline with much to fill up.”

Wansey's *Journal.*

I. Henry Wansey. 1794.

Monday. [June 30] I attended a sale of some military lands (by auction at the Tontine Coffee House1) situated in the north part of New York State. Twenty five acres in the township of Cato, were sold at two shillings and eightpence currency per acre, (one shilling and sixpence sterling) * * * *

Same day, in Loudon's (the bookseller) shop I met with the Reverend John Hurt, a clergyman, from Kentucky, where he had lived many years in the town of Lexington. He has travelled through Virginia, Pennsylvania, and most parts of America. No country for making a fortune like Kentucky. He named three men who began with less than three hundred pounds a-piece, in his memory, and are now worth thirty thousand pounds sterling, only store keepers.

He says there is much want of judgment in purchasing lands; there are at this time lands even in Kentucky, not worth a pinch of snuff an acre, and others that would be cheap at twenty or thirty dollars an acre. The next land to it in point of excellence, he says, is about Harrisburgh, on to Winchester and Hagar's Town, and the rest of the Shenandoah

The Journal of an Excursion to the United States of North America in the Summer of 1794. By Henry Wansey, F. A. S. Salisbury. 1796. pp. 219–226.

Page Ten Valley. He thinks lands are not eligible more than forty-two or forty-three degrees of North latitude in the back country. He has often been to the new federal city of Washington; has no doubt it must be very considerable in a few years, if the government

is not overturned, for nothing less can prevent it. Mercantile men will principally settle in the South-East corner on East River. The navigation there is deep, (thirty-six fathom) and always free from the interruption of ice throughout the winter. The government will make it a principal object to improve this place, and all its regulations respecting its future grandeur are already planned, suitable to a great and growing empire. * * * * * *

The whole area of the city consists of upwards of four thousand acres. The ground is on an average forty feet higher than the water of the river, and yet a stream of fresh water called Watts' Branch, may be brought within half a mile of the city, at the height of forty feet above the level of the city itself, which will be very convenient for all waterworks and manufactures, &c. Many houses are already built, and a very handsome hotel, which cost in the erection more than thirty thousand dollars (six thousand seven hundred pounds sterling). It is now apportioned into one thousand two hundred and thirty-six lots, for building, (which are for sale). Each lot contains ground for building three or four houses, according to general rules to be observed for making them uniform. The deepest lots are two hundred and seventy feet, by seventy, fronting the street. A square has from twenty to thirty lots in it. The value of each lot is from forty pounds to two hundred pounds sterling.

There is to be a national University erected there, as well as the Mint, Pay Office, Treasury, supreme Courts of Justice, Residences for the Ambassadors; in short, all the Public Offices. The city is to be built after a plan laid down for every street, of a fine white stone found in the neighborhood, equal to Portland. Each house is to be forty feet from the ground to the roof, in all the principal streets, which are to be from seventy to one hundred feet wide. The first street Page Eleven was formed upon an exact meridian line, drawn for the purpose by a Mr. Ellicot, which passes through the Capitol, the seat of the legislature, on an eminence, from whence the streets diverge into radii in every direction. It has, therefore, the full command of every quarter of the city. From it you can see every vessel that comes in or goes out of the harbour, and every carriage or horseman that enters the city by the bridge. One of the streets (Pensylvania) is marked out to be four miles long * * *

* * The question still with me is, whether the scheme is not too magnificent for the present state of things.

The original projector of this city was the Great Washington himself. Early in life, he contemplated the opening of this river from the tidewater, (within three miles of this city) up to nearly its source. His public employments in the part of the country through which the Potomack and its branches run, had given him a more complete knowledge of this river, than almost any other man possessed, at that time; and his mind was strongly impressed with its future importance; but the period for undertaking a work of such magnitude, had not yet arrived. The country as yet was but thinly inhabited, and canals and locks but little understood in America. General Washington, however, kept this object always in view, waiting until time and circumstances should enable him to bring it forward, with a prospect of success.

In the year 1784, a Company was formed, for the purpose of clearing and opening the navigation of this river. A capital of fifty thousand pounds was required for this work, which was to be re-paid by the tolls arising from the navigation of the river, and it has already answered the purposes for which it was instituted, the one hundred pounds shares now selling at a vast advance.

The reason why a situation on the Potomack River is more eligible than any other for a federal city, is, that this river runs more directly east and west, than any river besides, by which means it will connect the back country with the Atlantic Page Twelve States, and preserve their federal union. In point of trade also, it will unite them by interest; as by a navigable cut, of only seventeen miles from Savage River2 (a branch of the Potomack) to the Youghiogany,3 which runs into the Ohio, a complete navigation can be effected from Kentucky across the country, clear to the Chesapeak.*

* The buildings and works at the Federal City are, I understand, at this time (1796) almost at a stand. The prospect of a rupture with this country, and other important affairs of the

States have occasioned this to be neglected, but there is no doubt they will be resumed, and the intended plan perfected. An act of the legislature has fixed the time for its removal thither; and if the works do not proceed fast enough, the government will then take care to offer such premiums and advantages to the Public, as soon to fill it with native inhabitants. The Connecticut people, good as their situation is, will transplant themselves by hundreds to Kentucky, or any other back lands, wherever they find they can sooner encrease their fortunes.

This will consolidate the strength and union of the government, more than can be at first conceived. The opening of the Mississippi would otherwise have taken Kentucky and Cumberland4 [West Tennessee] off from the union.

From the Mississippi, direct east to the Atlantic Ocean, is about seven hundred and fifty miles; of this, the federal city is one third distance, or two hundred and fifty miles. Mr. Maddison supposes the center of population will proceed in a south-west direction.

From the federal city, westward to Pittsburgh, by land, is about one hundred and eighty miles, through Hagar's Town, which is sixty. The inland navigation of the Potomack is used twenty-four miles above Cumberland, a country abounding in coal. From the mouth of Savage River, to Dunkard's Bottom, or Cheat River,5 a branch of the Monongahela, (which runs also into the Ohio) is thirty-seven miles, after which it is navigable to the Ohio, but this land carriage of thirty-seven miles, may be reduced to seventeen miles, at a small expence.

Produce and goods from the Ohio, can even now (by a land carriage of forty miles) be sent cheaper to Alexandria, than English goods can be delivered from Northampton to London.

The settlers on the Ohio and Mississippi, will doubtless carry their heavy produce down those rivers, southward, to the Gulph of Mexico, but their returns will be most naturally through the Potomack, as they cannot ascend the western waters, without great expence

and loss of time: the current is so rapid, that a sharp-pointed boat, with six oars, can scarcely ascend fifteen miles a day.

What appears of still greater moment, is, that the fur and peltry trade of the great lakes,6 may be brought to the city of Washington, through the Potomack, four hundred miles nearer than to any other shipping port, it has ever been carried to heretofore.

Coal, slate, marble, freestone, and limestone, in abundance, are all found on the very banks of this noble river.

All these circumstances clearly mark its road to future greatness; but yet for many years to come, it will, like many other of their large undertakings, be a body without a soul. Many of their schemes, I observe, are highly speculative, and not the result of that necessity which gives strength and energy to our plans in Europe.

This was the sentiment that generally struck me most forcibly, as I travelled through the States— *the appearance every where of a vast outline, with much to fill up.*

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II. Isaac Weld. 1795.

It may be taken for granted, in the first place, that the whole of the country bordering upon the Patowmac river, and upon those rivers which fall into it, will trade with the city of Washington. Shenandoah, which is the longest, is not navigable at present; but it has been surveyed, and the company for improving the navigation of the Patowmac have stated that it can be made so for one hundred miles. This would be coming very near to Staunton, behind the Blue Mountains, and which is on the high road from Kentucky,7 and from the new State of Tenessee, to the city of Philadelphia. Frankfort, the capital of the former of these States, is nearly eight hundred miles from Philadelphia; Knoxville, that of the other, seven hundred and twenty-eight. Both these towns draw their supplies of foreign manufactures from Philadelphia, and by land carriage. Supposing then that

the navigation of the Shenandoah should be perfected, there would be a saving of four hundred and thirty-six miles of land carriage from going to Washington by the Shenandoah and Patowmac instead of going to Philadelphia; such a saving, it might be imagined, would draw the whole of this trade to Washington * * *

The people in Pittsburgh, and the western country along the waters of the Ohio, draw their supplies from Philadelphia and Baltimore; but they send the productions of the country, which would be too bulky for land carriage, down the Ohio and Mississippi to New Orleans. From Pittsburgh to New Orleans8 the distance is two thousand one hundred and eighty-three miles. On an average it takes about twenty-eight days to go down there with the stream; but to return by water it takes from sixty days to three months.

Travels through the States of North America, &c. During the years 1795, 1796, and 1797. By Isaac Weld, Junior. 3rd Ed., London. 1800. Vol. I, pp. 72–89.

Page Fifteen The passage back is very laborious as well as tedious; on which account they seldom think of bringing back boats which are sent down from Pittsburgh, but on arriving at New Orleans they are broken up, and the plank sold. These boats are built on the cheapest construction, and expressly for the purpose of going down stream. The men get back the best way they can, generally in ships bound from New Orleans to the Southern States, and from thence home by land. Now, if the passage from the Ohio to the Patowmac is opened, it cannot be supposed that the people in Pittsburgh and the vicinity will continue thus to send the produce down to Orleans, from whence they cannot bring any thing in return; they will naturally send to the federal city, from whence they can draw the supplies they are in want of, and which is so much nearer to them, that when the navigation is perfected it will be possible to go there and back again in the same time that it requires merely to go down to New Orleans * *

Considering the vastness of the territory, which is thus opened to the federal city by means of a water communication; considering also that it is capable, from the fertility of its soil, of maintaining three times the number of inhabitants that are to be found at present in all

the United States; and that it is advancing at the present time more rapidly in population than any other part of the whole continent; there is a good foundation for thinking that the federal city, as soon as the navigation is perfected, will increase most rapidly; and that at a future day, if the affairs of the United States go on as prosperously as they have done, it will become the grand emporium of the west,9 and rival in magnitude and splendor the cities of the old world * *

The ground in general, within the limits of the city, is agreeably undulated; but none of the risings are so great as to become objects of inconvenience in a town. The soil is chiefly of a yellowish clay mixed with gravel. There are numbers of excellent springs in the city, and water is readily had in most places by digging wells. Here are two streams Page Sixteen likewise, which run through the city, Reedy Branch and Tiber Creek.* The perpendicular height of the source of the latter, above the level of the tide, is two hundred and thirty-six feet.

* Upon the granting possession of waste lands to any person, commonly called the *location of lands,* it is usual to give particular names to different spots, and also to the creeks and rivers. On the original location of the ground now allotted for the seat of the federal city, this creek received the name of Tiber Creek, and the identical spot of ground on which the capitol now stands was called Rome. This anecdote is related by many as a certain prognostic of the future magnificence of this city, which is to be, as it were, a second Rome.

By the regulations published, it was settled that all the houses should be built of brick or stone, the walls to be thirty feet high, and to be built parallel to the line of the street, but either upon it or withdrawn from it, as suited the taste of the builder. However, numbers of wooden habitations have been built; but the different owners have all been cautioned against considering them as permanent. They are to be allowed for a certain time only, and then destroyed. Three commissioners, who reside on the spot, are appointed by the

president, with a salary, for the purpose of superintending the public and other buildings, and regulating every thing pertaining to the city.

The only public buildings carrying on as yet, [November, 1795], are the president's house, the capitol, and a large hotel * * * The hotel is a large building of brick, ornamented with stone; it stands between the president's house and the capitol. In the beginning of the year 1796, when I last saw it, it was roofed in, and every exertion making to have it finished with the utmost expedition. It is anything but beautiful. The capitol, at the same period, was raised only a very little way above the foundation.

The private houses are all plain buildings; most of them have been built on speculation and still remain empty. The greatest number, at any one place, is at Green Leafs Point, on the main river, just above the entrance of the eastern branch. This spot has been looked upon by many as the most convenient one for trade; but others prefer the shore Page Seventeen of the eastern branch, on account of the superiority of the harbour, and the great depth of the water near the shore. There are several other favourite situations, the choice of any one of which is a matter of speculation at present. * * Were the houses that have been built situated in one place all together, they would make a very respectable appearance, but scattered about as they are, a spectator can scarcely perceive any thing like a town. Excepting the streets and avenues, and a small part of the ground adjoining the public buildings, the whole place is covered with trees. To be under the necessity of going through a deep wood for one or two miles, perhaps, in order to see a next door neighbour, and in the same city, is a curious, and, I believe, a novel circumstance. The number of inhabitants in the city, in the spring of 1796, amounted to about five thousand, including artificers, who formed by far the largest part of that number. Numbers of strangers are continually passing and repassing through a place which affords such an extensive field for speculation * *

In the spring of 1796, when I was last on the spot, the building of the capitol was absolutely at a stand for want of money; the public lots were at a very low price, and

the commissioners were unwilling to dispose of them; in consequence they made an application to Congress, praying the house to guaranty a loan of three hundred thousand dollars, without which they could not go on with the public buildings, except they disposed of the lots to a great disadvantage, and to the ultimate injury of the city; so strong, however, was the opposition, that the petition was suffered to lie on the table unattended to for many weeks; nor was the prayer of it complied with until a number of gentlemen, that were very deeply interested in the improvement of the city, went round to the different members, and made interest with them in person to give their assent to the measure.

* * * *

A large majority, however, of the people in the United States is desirous that the removal of the seat of government should take place; and there is little doubt that it will take place at the appointed time.

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III. Francis Baily. 1796.

I set off on the 1st of *September,* 1796, to make a tour of the western country,—that land of Paradise, according to the flattering accounts given by *Imlay* and others. Wishing to go to the new city of Washington, we (I was in company with a gentleman of the name of Heighway, who was going down to the North-western settlement to form a plantation) took our route through Philadelphia and Baltimore. There was none of that inconvenience from bad roads, so terrible to a traveller in the winter. On the contrary, we went on with a rapidity and safety equal to any mode of travelling in England.

From Baltimore to the new city of Washington is forty-five miles, where we arrived on the 5th of *October* following. The road is well furnished with taverns, which in general are good, at least as good as can be expected in this part of the world. Close to Washington is a handsome town called Georgetown; in fact it will form part of the new city; for being so near the site intended for it, and being laid out nearly on the same plan, its streets will be

only a prolongation of the streets laid out for the city of Washington: so that it will in course of time lose its name of Georgetown, and adopt the general one of Washington. Much in the same manner the small places formerly separated from the metropolis of England have lost their name, and fallen under the general denomination of London.

Georgetown is situated on a hill close to the river Potomak; it presents a beautiful view from the surrounding country, of which also it commands a fine prospect. It is a seaport

Journal of a Tour in Unsettled Parts of North America in 1796 & 1797. By the late Francis Baily, F. R. S., President of the Royal Astronomical Society. London. 1856. pp. 124–129.

Page Nineteen town, and some of their vessels are employed in the London trade. There are stages run daily between this place and Baltimore, for which you pay four dollars. There are also stages to and from Alexandria, a handsome and flourishing town situated on the Potomak, lower down the stream, and about eight miles off; for which you pay a fare of three quarters of a dollar. We put up at the Federal Arms whilst we were there [Georgetown]. It is a good inn, but their charges are most extravagantly high.

The Potomak at this place may be about as wide as the Thames at London Bridge. The navigation of the river is safe; and it is deep enough for merchantmen above Georgetown.

I presume you know upon what principle the new city is laid out: the President's House and the Capitol are situated upon two eminences; and other different rising grounds in the site are fixed on, with an intention of erecting obelisks, statues, &c., to eminent men * * * Our first walk was to the President's House, which is a building of stone about the size of Whitehall. It is nearly completed; and when fitted up will be a handsome edifice. It commands a fine view of the harbour, and also of the Capitol, *to which* there is a broad street intended to be built. The Capitol stands upon the highest ground in the city, and commands a still better view of the harbour, as the prospect extends a considerable way down the river. The Capitol, which is also of stone, was in a great state of forwardness; and it was expected to be finished before the time appointed for the removal of Congress,

January, [December] 1800. It is impossible to say what kind of an appearance it will make when it is finished; but, if I may judge from what was already done, I think I may pronounce it to be a building worthy the taste and enterprise of a free and flourishing people. From the Capitol we walked down to the Point, where there is a place marked out for a battery. The view from here is extremely delightful:—On each side, a fine river, flowing with a gentle current along the base of a hilly and romantic country. In front, these two rivers form a junction extending as far as the eye can reach, and the Page Twenty prospect is terminated only by the distant country. The banks on each side are covered with innumerable plantations, with the distant view of Alexandria and its towering steeples, about six miles below, projecting apparently into the middle of the river. In the rear is the still nearer view of Georgetown, and of the President's House and the Capitol. All tend to render it one of the most delightful and pleasant sites for a town I have ever remarked in the whole United States. The private buildings go on but slowly. There are about twenty or thirty houses built near the Point, as well as a few in South Capitol Street, and about a hundred others scattered over in other places: in all I suppose about two hundred: and these constitute the great city of Washington. The truth is, that not much more than one-half the city is *cleared:* —the rest is *in woods;* and most of the streets which are laid out are cut through these woods, and have a much more pleasing effect *now* than I think they will have when they shall be built; for now they appear like broad avenues in a park, bounded on each side by thick woods; and there being so many of them, and proceeding in so many various directions, they have a certain wild, yet uniform and regular appearance, which they will lose when confined on each side by brick walls.

The canal and the gardens, as well as the bridges, which you see marked down in the plan, are not yet begun; they are still in the same state of nature that they were before the city was marked out. In fact, were it not for the President's House and the Capitol, you would be ignorant that you were near the spot intended for the metropolis of the United States.

Game is plenty in these parts, and, what perhaps may appear to you remarkable, I saw some boys who were out a shooting, actually kill several brace of partridges in what will be one of the most public streets of the city. I mention this, to give you an idea of the present state of the city; and I could not help reflecting at the time, what a different appearance it presents now to what there is every probability it will in the course of a few years; when, instead of being (as it is now) uncleared and uncultivated, it will resound Page Twenty-one with the busy hum of men, and become the emporium of whatever shall be worthy the observation of man.

Building lots in this city sell from six to twenty-five cents (a cent is a halfpenny) per square foot, according to their situations, &c. The Federal Arms, where we put up, is the best, though the dearest, tavern in Georgetown. It cost us, whilst we were there, for dinner, supper, breakfast, luncheon, and horses, four dollars each. Our horse not being trained to the chaise, we were obliged to sell it, which we did for forty dollars; and, at about half-past one, *October* 7th , we started on our journey over the Allegany mountains to Pittsburgh.

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IV. Duke of La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt. 1797.

ROAD TO FEDERAL CITY.

* * * * * *

I had met in passing over Mount-Pleasant-ferry a young man, who understanding that I intended to go to Federal-City, proposed that we should travel together, and promised to meet me at the house of the old jesuit. He was faithful to his appointment. Two other inhabitants of Federal-City were with him, so that by their company I was eased of the inquietude common to strangers travelling in Maryland, lest they should lose their way, for there are no direction posts by the road side to point out the true way, and the houses

are so thinly scattered, that a traveller may wander about a great deal without having an opportunity of being informed of the right road.

The politics of my new travelling companions were very different from those of the house I had just quitted. “Is it true,” said one of them to me, “ *that France has declared war against America?* ” “I believe nothing of it,” answered I; “France loves America sincerely; she has a little quarrel with the government, but she wishes for nothing more than the happiness and property of the people of America.”

“These reports of a declaration of war are false, and spread by the merchants who wish to raise the price of their commodities, or by the English who wish the Americans to hate the French.” “Ah! sir, they will never succeed in that; and should France be in the wrong, she has rendered us

Travels through the United States of North America &c in the years 1795, 1796, and 1797. By the Duke De La Rochefoucault-Liancourt. Translated by H. Neuman. London. 1799. Vol. II, pp. 309–339.

Page Twenty-three services sufficient not to be treated so rigorously: and as for me, if this country should go to war with France, I would go over to the side of the French, and take my friends with me.” “And I also“—”And I also,” said the other two. “If an American were to fight against a Frenchman,” said they in the course of their conversation, in which I took part only for the sake of supporting it, “that would be like fighting against his father.” “And worse still,” said another, “for our father has only given us life, and it very often happens that he does not give us any money. France has given us liberty, advanced us millions when our paper currency was in great discredit, and that at a time when she was not sure that we should ever be able to repay it; and she has lent us troops and ships * *”

The affection which these brave fellows so plainly manifested to have for France was united with an attachment for the unfortunate M. de la Fayette; and it is remarked, that it is the same throughout America, and that the sentiment of hatred for France,

and indifference about la Fayette, are also found united in the opposite party. “Is it not shameful,” said my fellow travellers, “that the United States should have done nothing for that brave man who has rendered us so many services? If the president had demanded him from the Emperor, it is certain he would have given him up to us, for he belongs to us.” “Without doubt,” added they, “the president thought that he did well in not demanding him, but he would have done better if he had, and also if he had not made that infamous treaty; and be assured, sir, that we are very numerous in every part of America who think the same.”

I detail this conversation, to which I affirm that I add nothing, in the first place, perhaps, because it gave me pleasure, and then because it is, whatever the English may say of it, the expression of the sentiments of a great majority of the people of America; sentiments which France ought carefully to maintain without abusing them, and which, in the mean time, she would put an end to by alienating them, if she were not to conduct herself with justice and liberality towards America—if she does not speedily put a stop to all 3 Page Twenty-four the piracies which are exercised at this time by her commissioners in the West Indies, at which every honest Frenchman revolts who is a friend to his country, under whatever denomination he may come.

I could every day recount similar examples, for there are but few taverns at which I stop where I do not hear the same expressions of attachment, from which I become every day more persuaded of the necessity of spreading in this country wise and moderate writings, which should display the actual political situation of France with the United States, and shew that she is the friend of America, and that it is her interest always to be so.

The country from *Upper Marlborough* to *Eastern-branch* rises successively. * * * From the tops of the mountains which border upon the Eastern-branch, the river Potowmack is seen far beyond George-Town, and as far as Alexandria. The Eastern-branch is also seen in its course for five or six miles; and, in short, there is a prospect of the whole site of the new city, the public and private buildings of which may be distinguished as they rise: this view

is sublime and beautiful, but sufficiently confined by the heights beyond the Potowmack to enable the eye to embrace the various objects of it without being lost in its immensity.

* * * * *

The Eastern-branch is passed in a tolerably good boat, a little too flat, and a great deal too small for the quantity of horses which are taken into it. I passed in this boat with ten horses and a carriage, and was uneasy till I arrived on the other side. The passage over this river is from three quarters of a mile to a league. After having crossed it you enter Federal City, that is to say, in its site, for at present there are only a few houses to be seen in this capital of the United States—in this metropolis of North America.

But as Federal-City is by its destination, or at least by the project of its destination, a principal point in the territory, as well as in the interior policy of the United States, I shall speak of it at some length, and in such a manner that the history of this great project may be well comprehended; Page Twenty-five and of the means employed for its execution, of its situation, actual and designed, as well as a mature examination of all the circumstances enable me to foresee.

A little time after the constitution of the United States was made, its partizans—and no one was then accused of not being so—saw, that to make the system of confederation complete it was necessary to establish a general seat of government in a central point of the United States, independent of every particular State, and of which the sovereignty should belong to the Union. As the general government exercised a judicial authority apart, from that of the several States, the vicinity of its tribunals to those of a particular State, which, having a jurisdiction of its own, might inflict a different punishment from that of the Union for the same crime, and even on the same spot, was a great inconvenience, and was to be remedied. The advantages resulting from the residence of the general government in a particular State might be the occasion of jealousy among the States, and cause the dissolution of the Union; and this source of discontent it was necessary to

remove: neither Philadelphia nor New-York was placed in the centre of the States; and the deputies of the Southern States being removed at a greater distance from the seat of government than those of the North, this circumstance might be a cause of dissatisfaction to the former, and interrupt that harmony it was so important to preserve. To conclude; the sovereign government having something of a fiction in its existence, its establishment in a territory belonging solely to the Union, and in which it could exercise all acts of sovreignty without any mixture of other sovreign authority, would give it a greater appearance of reality: such were the principal reasons which were in fact plausible for adopting the scheme of placing the residence of the general government in a territory absolutely ceded to the Union. In July 1790 the Congress passed a law to this effect.

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This law, which passed while the Congress sat at New York, provided also, that the government of the United States should be removed to Philadelphia, to remain there Page Twenty-six till the first Monday of December 1800, the period of its installation in its permanent residence.

The Congress had been previously assured of the favourable disposition of the States of Virginia and Maryland towards this plan; both one and the other having, in preceding sittings of their legislatures, offered to cede the part of their territory necessary to its completion. The seat of the government certainly could not be better chosen: * * * a situation favourable for the erection of a great commercial city, with ample means of being furnished with provisions, and in a fine and healthy spot.

As the States of Virginia and Maryland had an evident advantage in the establishment of the government in the place chosen by this law, they were active to forward the execution of the scheme, towards which Virginia gave the union the sum of a hundred and twenty thousand dollars, and Maryland, seventy-two thousand dollars. The proprietors of lands on the spot chosen for the new city had an interest still more immediate in the plan. They

gave the Union the absolute property of the half of the lots of which the city was to be composed. They also gratuitously ceded all the ground necessary for streets and squares, with a reservation of eighty dollars [£25 currency] to be paid for every acre employed in forming public gardens. The lots remaining in the hands of individual proprietors, and those that became the property of the federal government, were to be so distributed that individuals and the government should equally divide the advantage and inconvenience of the respective situations of the several lots.

In March 1796 the Congress passed a law, by which the commissioners were empowered to borrow, with the sanction of the president of the United States, the sum of three hundred thousand dollars, to defray the expences of the establishment ordered by the law of 1790, with provisoes, that they should not borrow more than two hundred thousand dollars in the same year, nor pay more than six per cent for the loan; that the sums borrowed should be redeemable in 1803; and that the lots in the city belonging to the government, not sold, and destined to be so, should be the pledge for the Page Twenty-seven loan, and the means of its re-payment, the United States undertaking to make good the deficiency, if there should be any. The same law enjoined the commissioners to make a return every Six months to the secretary of the treasury of expenditures of the sums thus borrowed. * *

The navigation of the Potowmac was interrupted in many places below Cumberland, to the distance of a hundred and ninety-two miles from the seat of the new city; but more especially at fifteen miles above George-Town, where there was a great fall, and at a place six miles nearer, where there was a less considerable fall. A company had been incorporated by the States of Virginia and Maryland, in 1784, by the name of the *Potowmack Company;* with a grant of tolls on different canals they had undertaken. The adoption of the scheme of establishing the general government on the banks of the Potowmack, gave new activity to these undertakings, which had begun to languish. In 1795 the shares of this company, which at its establishment amounted to five hundred, at four hundred and forty-four dollars each, were increased to six hundred; and thus the company had the disposal of two hundred and seventy thousand four hundred dollars

to improve the navigation of the Potowmack. The States of Virginia and Maryland were moreover particularly interested in the success of the company, by being proprietors of a great number of its shares.

When the undertakings of this company shall be finished, the produce of an immense extent of country, which at present is conveyed by land to Philadelphia and Baltimore, will find a more ample, ready, and less expensive market through the means of this great river; and Federal-City will acquire new resources both for its consumption and its commerce, adding greatly to the natural advantages of its situation.

The point of land which separates the Potowmack from the east branch, and which is within the site of the new city, is, at different times of the year, not only difficult, but dangerous to double: and the East-branch presenting the greatest depth of water, and the safest anchorage for ships, it became an object of importance to join the Potowmack to that branch by a canal; besides that such a canal would be of Page Twenty-eight great advantage to the new city. Two lotteries were authorized by the State of Maryland, in 1798, for the forming such a canal; each lottery consisting of a hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars, of which a profit of fifteen per cent, that is to say, twenty-six thousand two hundred and fifty thousand dollars was granted to the canal.

Such were the means employed for the establishment of Federal City, whose site extends more than three miles along the banks of the Potowmack, and the East-branch; and includes four thousand one hundred and twenty-four acres square.

In America, where, more than in any other country in the world, a desire for wealth is the prevailing passion, there are few schemes which are not made the means of extensive speculations; and that of the erecting of Federal-City presented irresistible temptations, which were not in fact neglected.

Mr. Morris was among the first to perceive the probability of immense gain in speculations in that quarter; and in conjunction with Messrs. Nicholson and Greenleaf, a very short

time after the adoption of the plan purchased every lot he could lay hold on, either from the commissioners or individual proprietors; that is to say, every lot that either one or the other would sell at that period. Of the commissioners he bought six thousand lots at the price of eighty dollars per lot, each containing five thousand two hundred and sixty-five square feet. The conditions of his bargain with the commissioners, which was concluded in 1793, were, that fifteen hundred of the lots should be chosen by him in the north-east quarter of the city, and the remaining four thousand five hundred wherever Mr. Morris and his partners chose to select them; that he should erect an hundred and twenty houses of brick, and with two stories, on these lots within the space of seven years; that he should not sell any lot before the first of January 1796, nor without the like condition of the building; and finally, that the payment for the lots should be completed within seven years, to commence on the first of May 1794; a seventh part to be paid Page Twenty-nine annually—that is to say, about sixty-eight thousand dollars yearly, the purchase money for the whole being four hundred and eighty thousand dollars.

The lots purchased by Mr. Morris from individuals amounted to nearly the same number, and were bought at the same price. The periods for payment varied with the different proprietors, and are not of importance in this general history of Federal City.

The sale made to Mr. Morris was the only one of like extent made either by the commissioners or individuals. Expecting a higher price, the commissioners waited for a time when demands for habitations would be more numerous. The private proprietors acted on the same principle, and both one and the other, in the sale made to Mr. Morris, considered it chiefly as the means of hastening the completion of the city, by the inducement he would have to sell part of his lots, and so augment the number of persons interested in the rapid progress of the undertaking. Mr. Morris, in fact, sold about a thousand of his lots within eighteen months of his purchase. The building of a house for the president, and a place for the sittings of the Congress, excited, in the purchasers of the lots, the hope of a new influx of speculations. The public papers were filled with exaggerated praises of the new city; accounts of the rapidity of its progress towards

completion; in a word, with all the artifices which trading people in every part of the world are accustomed to employ in the disposal of their wares, and which are perfectly known, and amply practiced in this new world.

Mr. Law and Mr. Dickinson, two gentlemen that had lately arrived from India, and both with great wealth, General Howard, General Lee, and two or three wealthy Dutch merchants, were the persons who bought the greatest number of lots of Mr. Morris; but none more than Mr. Law, who purchased four hundred and forty-five lots. The lowest they gave was two hundred and ninety-three dollars per lot—or rather five pence for each square foot, of Maryland money; for all the lots were not absolutely of the same extent. Many of the lots sold for six, eight, and ten pence per square foot; Page Thirty the last comers constantly paying a higher price, and the situation of the lots also making a difference in their value. Some of the more recent purchasers, in order to have one or more of the entire squares into which the whole was divided, or for other purposes of their speculations, made their purchases of the commissioners, paying at the same rate for them. The bargains were all clogged with the same conditions to build as that of Mr. Morris. The number of lots sold in this manner amounted to six hundred. Each of the purchasers chose his ground according to the opinion he had of its general advantages, and of its being in a neighbourhood that would the most readily be filled with houses. The neighbourhood of the president's house, of the *Capitol,* of George-Town, the banks of the Potowmack, the Point, and the banks of the East-branch, were the places chiefly chosen by the first purchasers.

The opinion that the ground marked out for the whole city would soon be filled was so general, and the president of the United States and the commissioners were so much of the same opinion, that in their regulations they prohibited the cultivating any portion of the ground otherwise than for gardens; or to build houses with less than two stories, or even to build houses of wood.

These regulations were, however, speedily afterwards withdrawn; and the original proprietors had liberty to inclose and cultivate at their pleasure the ground they had not disposed of.

Mr. Blodget, one of the most considerable and intelligent speculators of Philadelphia, having purchased a large quantity of lots, under the pretence of forwarding the building of the city, but more probably with the real motive of disposing most securely and advantageously of his acquisitions, made two lotteries for the disposal of them. The principal lot of the first was a handsome tavern, built between the Capitol and the President's house, valued at fifty thousand dollars; the three principal lots of the second were three houses to be erected near the capitol, of the respective value of twenty-five thousand, fifteen thousand, and ten thousand, dollars. These lotteries were made before the Page Thirty-one prohibition of the State of Maryland to make private lotteries, without the authority of the legislature. They were powerfully patronized by the commissioners, who considered them as the means of advancing the building of the city. It appears that these lotteries were attended with the effect proposed to himself by Mr. Blodget, that of gaining a large profit on the disposal of his lots, and that he was the only person not deceived in the transaction.

The speculations of Mr. Morris, and the succeeding purchasers, had not the same rapid success. After the plan of the city had been for a while admired for its beauty and magnificence, people began to perceive that it was too extensive, too gigantic, for the actual circumstances of the United States, and even for those which must follow for a series of years, admitting that no intervening accidents arrested the progress of their prosperity. It was discovered that the immense extent of ground marked out for the city would not be so speedily covered with houses as was expected; and every proprietor of lots intrigued to get the neighbourhood of his lots first inhabited. From that instant the common interest ceased, and the proprietors became rivals. Each began to build in his own quarter, with the hope of drawing thither the new-comer. Each vaunted of the

advantages of that side of the city where his property lay, and depreciated others. The public papers were no longer filled with the excellencies of Federal-City, but with those of one or other of its quarters.

The commissioners were not altogether clear of this venal contest. Two of them possessed lots near George-Town; and if that had not been the case, their habits and prejudices relative to the city would have determined their opinion as to the advantage of beginning to build in one quarter or another, and would not have permitted them to remain indifferent spectators of the emulation of the several proprietors.

There were four principal quarters to which different interests had drawn the greatest number of houses. The inhabitants of George-Town, who had purchased a great many lots in their neighbourhood maintained that a small town Page Thirty-two already built was the proper spot to begin the new city, by facilitating and augmenting its resources. They boasted of the port of George-Town, and represented the commerce already belonging to the place as a favourable opening to the general commerce of the city.

The proprietors of lots near the Point declared that situation to be the most airy, healthy, and beautiful in the city; advantageous to commerce, as it lay along the banks of both rivers, and as being a central situation between the capitol and the President's house, from each of which it was equally distant.

The proprietors of the East-branch contemned the port of George-Town, and the banks of the Potowmack, which are not secure in winter from shoals of ice; they decried the Point, which, placed between the two rivers, was far from being able completely to enjoy the advantage of either; and boasted of their own port, because of its great depth, and its security from ice, and from the most prevailing winds. They vaunted of their vicinity to the capitol, which must be the common centre of affairs, it being the place of the sittings of the Congress, and in which all the members must meet, at least once in the day, and from which their distance was not more than three quarters of a mile.

The proprietors in the neighbourhood of the capitol contended, that Federal-City was not necessarily a commercial town; that the essential point was to raise a city for the establishment of the Congress and government; that the natural progress was, first to build houses round the capitol, and then to extend them towards the President's house, which, although of a secondary consideration, was nevertheless next in importance to the capitol; and that every effort should be made for the convenience of Congress and the facilitating of public affairs, to unite, by a continuation of streets and buildings, these two principal points of the government.

Thus each proprietor supported with his arguments the interests of the quarter where the mass of his property lay; but he built notwithstanding with great caution, and with a constant fear of some of the opposite interests prevailing.

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The commissioners, to whom was entrusted the erection of public edifices, were accused by the proprietors that lay at a distance from George-Town of paying an undue attention to the completion of the President's house, which was in their neighbourhood; of designing to establish the public-offices there, and, consequently, to neglect the capitol; in a word, of being partial to George-Town to the injury of the three other quarters of the town.

Each of these opinions relative to the spot at which they should begin to build the city might find advocates, even among disinterested people, regarding only the public advantage; but the public advantage was no motive of any of the rival parties.

This state of things continues at present. The President's house is sufficiently advanced to be covered in this year; that wing of the capitol which is at present begun (for the plan of that edifice is so extensive, that the execution of two thirds of it has been abandoned to an indefinite period), may, perhaps, be covered in during the succeeding year; and about a hundred and fifty houses are scattered over the vast surface traced out for the city, each of

the four contending quarters having from thirty to forty, for the most part very distant from each other.

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In collecting the information I have given to my reader on this subject, and the little that I have to say further respecting it, and in impartially observing the passions and prejudices of the majority of those from whom I made my enquiries, I was led more than once to the comparison between the man who employs his property and time in clearing and settling a large tract of land, and the person who is engaged with others in the establishment of a new city. The former can succeed only by collecting round him a number of families to whom it is his interest to sell his lands at a low price, and to whose prosperity of course he contributes. The poorest man is for his purposes a good occupier of his grounds. In conferring benefits on others, he increases his own welfare and happiness; he multiplies three-fold, nay ten-fold, the value of the lands that he still holds Page Thirty-four in his own possession, by the neighbourhood of the inhabitants he has drawn around him. The happiness of others is the proper element of his success. If he is of a humane disposition, he finds a multiplicity of occasions to do good without injury to himself. It is indeed his interest to be benevolent. Every instance of his expenditure is also turned to the public advantage; it is a service he renders, a pleasure he affords, to his colony; and no expence judiciously applied is prejudicial to his fortune; on the contrary, it incessantly augments his wealth: as his colony increases, more wealthy settlers present themselves, and his lands sell at a price he could not have procured without the previous exercise of his benevolence. When his colony has made a still greater progress, the produce of lands formerly waste is a new and real source of wealth to the state to which it is subject, and a new mass of productions for merchants and consumers. His condition is at once noble and delightful. He lives in the midst of husbandmen, consequently among men of the purest manners and dispositions, the furthest removed from vice of any kind among the human species. He is beloved and esteemed. And all these enjoyments he commands in a short period of time and owes them all to himself. If before the commencement of

his enterprize he was virtuous, he is become better by the very means he employed to enlarge his fortune. His heart is improved simply by the contemplation of the good he has effected. In a word he is more happy than ever. There are many examples of this kind in America, and among the most eminent of them is Captain Williamson of Genesee,10 who by an undertaking of this nature has augmented his fortune as greatly as he has increased the esteem in which he is held.

He, on the contrary, who is engaged in the establishment of a new city, can rarely confine to himself the conduct of the enterprize. If he is not counteracted in the whole of his views, he is sure to be so in the greater part of them. The poorer inhabitants that he receives on his estate are of no advantage to him. They are even burthensome, as they occupy the space that he wishes to fill with others, whose wealth may advance his fortune. Benevolence is banished Page Thirty-five from his system, by the necessary calculations of his interest. If those calculations induce him to expend sums for buildings, it is to erect taverns, shops, to open billiard-tables, and to create lotteries; in a word, to furnish the means of dissipation and pleasure—that is to say, the means of prodigality and vice. It is such objects as these that draw crowds of inhabitants to cities, and without them cities will never be extensive. When this adventurer sees his city increasing in population, it is only to see a conflict of interests, to contemplate jealousies daily arising, and enmities making good their footing. And then, at length, after years of innumerable vexations and incessant anxiety, he has gathered inhabitants to the extent he proposed, he has only drawn round him rivals and opponents, while he has done nothing for the real welfare of society. He may have increased his wealth, but he will not have added one to the number of his benevolent sentiments; and even such as he might have had before the commencement of his undertaking will be defaced by the spectacle he was obliged to witness, and the injustice to which he was subjected * *

George-Town

This small town, which is separated from the new city by a creek called *Rock-hall-creek,* stands upon several small hills, which render its aspect pleasing; but the communications between its several parts are difficult. Some years since the commerce of this place was considerable, but at present it is much diminished.

In 1791 the total value of its exportation amounted to 314,864 dollars; in 1792, to 348,539 dollars; in 1793, to 364,537 dollars; in 1794, to 128,924 dollars; in 1795 to 196,790 dollars; and in 1796, to 159,868 dollars. Tobacco, corn, and seeds, form the chief articles of exportation from George-Town; it re-exports directly a very small quantity of foreign articles, and is even compelled to send to other ports that are better markets much of the merchandize brought from Europe in its vessels. Its imports have also decreased: in 1792 the value of them amounted to 99,873 dollars; in Page Thirty-Six 1793, to 87,400 dollars; in 1794, to 139,964 dollars; in 1795, to 153,584 dollars; and in 1796, to 29,193 dollars. The shipping it employs in its foreign trade is at present about 2,500 tons; and in its coasting trade nearly a thousand tons.

The diminution of the culture of tobacco is one of the causes of the decay of its commerce: in 1792 it exported 9,444 hogsheads; and in 1796 no more than 2,461. But speculations in the lots of Federal-City is a more powerful cause of that decay. They have turned a great part of the capital of the merchants into that channel, and consequently diverted it from the trade of the place. Shares in the bank of this town, which were held by many of those merchants, have fallen through the same causes, from forty dollars, their original price, to thirty. This bank, established by the name of *Columbia Bank,* had originally a capital of 400,000 dollars, divided into ten thousand shares. Its capital was augmented with 150,000 dollars, by an act of the legislature of Maryland in its last session: it is employed in the same services as all the other banks of America. The notes it has in circulation are for the most part of the value of a dollar, and they are current at Alexandria, and all the western parts of Maryland as far as Baltimore.

The stores of George-Town are usually furnished from Baltimore; it is at that port that the ships belonging to George-Town generally dispose of their cargoes in returning from Europe. The merchants of this place expect to see their trade revive, from the completion of the two canals of the large and little falls of the Potowmack, the remainder of the navigation of that river being cleared from obstacles. They then expect to be the medium of exporting the produce of the countries watered by the Potowmack and the rivers that fall into it, which at present can be conveyed to George-Town only by land, at as high a price as the conveyance of them to Baltimore, which from its situation has the advantage of the towns on the banks of the Potowmack; when the price of the carriage of flour by land is three dollars per barrel, it will be only eight shillings and six pence by water. This advantage will be communicated also to the East-branch in Federal-City, and Alexandria.

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The merchants of George-Town persuade themselves that they will reap the greater part of the benefit of these navigations. Being placed the first on the route of those who will bring their produce from the countries above the city, and being provided with warehouses to receive goods, it will be a saving of money and time, in vessels coming down the river, to dispose of their cargoes at George-Town. They assert, that the port of this place, that is to say, the part of the river that may be converted to that purpose, will hold a great number of vessels with security; and the danger from shoals of ice, which they do not deny to exist during two months, they observe, may be avoided by vessels using the East-branch for that period.

The inhabitants of the banks of the East-branch trust to the depth and security of their river, to draw all the commerce of the place to themselves; and they do not doubt, that even the merchants of George-Town will soon find the advantage, and remove there. They are secure from the ice; and the interior canal between the Potowmack and them will, they imagine, directly afford them all the advantages of that great river.

The inhabitants of Alexandria pretend, that participating in like manner of the advantages of the navigation of the Potowmack through the canal, they have, moreover, the advantage of a commerce long established, and that is daily increasing—an advantage that is not to be counterbalanced by the difference of five miles more of sailing, which cannot deter vessels from proceeding to the market where they can both sell and buy to greater advantage.

Time will show which of these three places argues with the greatest truth. I think the argument is in favour of Alexandria.

Falls of the Potowmack.

An excursion which I made to the *falls* gave me an opportunity of seeing the canals, which are forming for the purpose of avoiding them, and are the undertaking of the *Potowmack Company.* The canal of the *smaller falls* is entirely finished; it is a mile and a half in length: four locks, Page Thirty-eight ten feet high, placed at its upper extremity, convey vessels down the river. The smaller falls are not strictly such; but the water is sufficiently checked and disturbed in its course to render the navigation impracticable, and the noise is considerable. Above the smaller falls, at a place where the Potowmack is confined to a narrow passage between mountains, a bridge has been lately erected, of the same kind as the bridge of Merrymack, near Newburyport, in Massachusetts: the same architect was employed in both. The bridge over the Potowmack is one hundred and twenty feet in the span; it is much admired here, because the people in this place have no knowledge of the arts, but is indeed disgusting for its heaviness, having an immense quantity of timber and iron wasted on it, that would have been spared in Europe, and with it a great part of the expence.

The canal of the *great falls* is also finished, excepting the locks, which are to be ten in number. The height of the falls themselves is seventy-eight feet, and the descent from the upper end of the canal to the lower end is about ninety feet. To make some use of

the canal in its present state, till the locks can be constructed, large masses of earth are left to check the rapidity of the water; vessels proceed to the place where these are, and the barrels of flour, and hogsheads of tobacco, which are the principal articles brought down the river, are rolled down an inclined plane made of wood (for this temporary use) to vessels that wait for them below.

The great fall of the Potowmack is beautiful, and deserves to be visited by all who arrive in this neighbourhood. * *

Mr. Law

All the time that I passed at Federal-City [April, 1797] I resided with Mr. Law. Last year he very much increased his domestic felicity by marrying an amiable woman, who unites accomplishments, sweetness of manner, and a charming figure, to a sound understanding, and all the qualities that contribute to make the married life happy.

I cannot, however, felicitate Mr. Law on the speculation which induced him to purchase a number of lots in this new Page Thirty-nine city, and to choose it for the place of his residence. It appears to me, that he might have made a more prudent and fortunate use of the great property he amassed by many years' toil in India. He enters every day more deeply into the concerns of this city, without being able sincerely to predict his success. His fortune is superior to the greatest fortunes in America, and he might have lived on his own revenues with splendour, happy himself, and making others so. His temper, which is sincere, humane, and generous, qualified him for that mode of life; notwithstanding which, he has wilfully plunged himself into an abyss of cares; and all the contentions of this distracted city, which not only prevent the enjoyment of his fortune, but even endanger it. He is not himself very confident of success, and he is far from being avaricious; but his ardent temper is continually deceiving him concerning the issue of the unfavourable circumstances which he cannot overlook; and every day his obstinacy on this subject

increases, continually leading him to new expenses in this vexatious speculation. I fear he will not be so fortunate as he deserves to be.

Alexandria.

I went by water from Federal-City to Alexandria, which is a distance only of six miles. The Potowmack, the whole way from one place to the other, is two miles in breadth; and its banks are well cultivated and covered with a considerable number of houses. The Maryland side being more elevated presents a finer aspect. A succession of small hills and beautiful vallies, intersected with streams, and having clumps of trees, and even pleasure-grounds, scattered up and down, give it a very lively appearance. The opposite side belonging to Virginia is not absolutely flat, but the ground does not rise except at a distance from the river, and not in the same degree as on the Maryland side. It however does not want prospects which are charming. It is in going from Alexandria to Federal-City that the traveller has the best view of the country. The eye is not lost, as in the other route, in the immense extent of the Potowmack; which, continually enlarging, 4 Page Forty leaves nothing to be seen at length but the horizon. In this passage the country closes till the prospect is bounded by the chain of mountains which form the falls at fifteen miles distance; and in the intervening space, the eye rests on the sloping ground destined for the site of Federal-City, and where already there is a sufficient number of houses to ornament the scene. The mountains on the side of Maryland and Virginia, which decrease in approaching the Chesapeak, consequently rise and enlarge on the view in proceeding the other way. The division of the waters of the Potowmack and the East-branch, made by the point of land which is the site of Federal-City, is an object that arrests the attention, and whose grandeur deducts nothing from its beauty. It is unquestionably among the finest views that are to be seen on any river. It does not, however, make me forget those of *North-River,* in the state of New York, which in my opinion are even preferable; without speaking of that delightful scene of the passage on that river in the highlands.

This is at present the season when shoals of herrings appear on the coasts of America, and in the rivers communicating with the sea. I have constantly seen at every creek a number of people employed in fishing for them with long nets, which they drag for a while and then draw the extremities together. There is seldom a draught at which they do not take thousands. The greater part of them are instantly cured. There is an immense consumption in every part of America of this species of food. Fresh herrings sell here for four dollars a thousand. Sturgeon is also very plentiful in the rivers of this country, but I do not think it as good as the sturgeons in Europe. Alexandria is, beyond all comparison, the handsomest town in Virginia, and indeed is among the finest of the United States. It stands on a small plain, elevated however a few feet above the river, and so as not to be incommoded by the water. This town, which was begun about thirty years since, is built on a regular plan. Streets sufficiently wide intersect each other at right angles; and spacious squares add to its beauty, convenience, and salubrity. Almost all the houses and warehouses are of brick. Although all the buildings have not an appearance of magnificence, Page Forty-one all are convenient and neat; and the houses are of two stories. The quays are large and commodious, and extend along the river every way.

This town increases very rapidly, owing to the flourishing state of its commerce, which, no doubt, will be still improved by the opening of the navigation of the Potowmack.

It is maintained by many of the inhabitants of Federal-City that the quays of Alexandria are not so safe for shipping as those of the East-branch, being more exposed to shoals of ice; and that small vessels, descending the Potowmack, and passing through the canal, will not venture again into the Potowmack as far as Alexandria. This opinion is not that of the merchants of Alexandria; who, beside, would very little raise the price of flour, which boats would bring down the Potowmack, if they were even obliged to reload them in larger vessels at the canal. Hitherto they have received the produce of the upper parts of Virginia by land, and the carts which bring them constantly arrive in great numbers.

Alexandria carries on a constant trade with the West-India islands; and also some with Europe. The price of flour11 here at present is six dollars and a half per barrel. The population of this town amounts to nearly five thousand souls, of which there are about eight hundred black slaves.

The value of the exportations of Alexandria amounted in 1791 to 381,242 dollars; in 1792, to 535,592 dollars; in 1793, to 812,889 dollars; in 1795, to 948,460 dollars; and in 1796, to more than 1,100,000 dollars.

There is a bank at Alexandria, and it is the only one in Virginia. It was established in December, 1792, by an act of the legislature. Its original capital was 150,000 dollars, divided into 750 shares, of 200 dollars each. By a law passed in December 1795 it was authorized to augment its capital by the addition of 350,000 dollars, divided into 1750 new shares.

This bank, which was established on the same principles, and for the same purpose, as all the other banks of America, makes a dividend from four and a half to five per cent half yearly. It issues notes to the value of a dollar, which are current throughout all Virginia, at George-Town, and even for the most part in Maryland.

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V. John Davis of Salisbury. 1801.

“In this City may that piety and virtue, that wisdom and magnanimity, that constancy and self-government, which adorned the great character whose name it bears, be for ever held in veneration! Here, and throughout *America,* may simple manners, pure morals, and true religion, flourish for ever!”

The City of *Washington* was now the centre of attraction to the nation. Multitudes flocked to it, in different directions, to hear the inaugural speech of Mr. *Jefferson.*

Of this general enthusiasm I was not without my share. Mr. *Jefferson's* notes on *Virginia* was the book that first taught me to think; and my heart now beat with the desire to hear the accents of wisdom fall from the tongue of that man, whose pen had engrafted much truth on my mind. I therefore departed for the city of *Washington,* passing through, in my way to it, *Philadelphia* and *Baltimore.*

The mind of the Traveller must be abstracted from all local emotion, who can enter unmoved the city at the confluence of the *Potomac,* and *Eastern Branch.* He witnesses the triumph of freedom over oppression, and religious tolerance over superstition. It is the capital of the United States that fills his imagination! It is the country of *Jefferson* and *Burr* that he beholds! It is the rising mistress of the world that he contemplates!

The tract chosen for the City of *Washington,* is situated at the junction of the *Potomac* river, and *Eastern Branch;* extending about four miles along their respective shores. This territory, which is called *Columbia,* lies partly in the State of

Travels of Four Years and a Half in the United States of North America; During 1798, 1799, 1801, and 1802. Dedicated by permission to Thomas Jefferson, Esq., President of the United States. By John Davis. pp. 167–185; 208–223; 337–339.

Page Forty-three *Virginia,* and partly in the State of Maryland; and was ceded, as everybody knows, by those two States, to the United States of America; by which it was established the seat of Government, after the year of 1800.

The City of *Washington* is to be divided into squares, or grand divisions, by streets running due North and South, and East and West, which form the ground work of the plan. But from the Capitol, the President's house, and some of the important areas, are to be diagonal streets, which will prevent the monotony that characterizes *Philadelphia.* * * * A wag would infer that the North and South streets received their names from a pilot, and the East and West ones from an Alphabetical teacher.

Library of Congress

In a southern direction from the President's house, and a western one from the Capitol, are to run two great pleasure parks, or malls, which will intersect and terminate upon the banks of the *Potomac;* and they are to be ornamented at the sides by a variety of elegant buildings, and houses for foreign Ministers.

Interspersed through the city, where the principal streets cross each other, is to be a number of open areas formed of various figures: fifteen of these areas are to be appropriated to the different States composing the Union; and, while they bear their respective names, be consecrated to the erecting of statues, obelisks, or columns, to the memory of their departed Heroes, Statesmen, and Poets. Upon a small eminence, where a line drawn due West from the Capitol, and another due South from the President's house, would intersect, is to be placed an Equestrian Statue of General *Washington.*

The Navy-yard and Marine-barracks are partly constructed. The Navy-yard is formed by the projection of a wharf into the *Eastern Branch,* from which a dock will be produced of great capaciousness; and the Marine-barracks are designed to form a mass of brick buildings two stories high.

A read is making from the Capitol to *Georgetown,* and another on the *New Jersey* avenue, between the Capitol and *Eastern Branch:* in effecting the last object, the declivity of Page Forty-four the abrupt hill to the South of the Capitol has been effectually removed.

Of the public edifices, the Capitol and President's house are the most magnificent. They are built of freestone (resembling the white and red *Portland*), which is dug from inexhaustible quarries on the banks of the *Potomac.* To the builder of the President's house might be applied the epitaph of Vanbrugh.

Lie heavy on him, Earth; for he Has laid a heavy load on thee!

The Treasury and War-office are constructed with brick. Some have objected, that the public offices are so remote from each other, as to obstruct the business of state. A

shallow, gothic remark! The symmetry of the city would have been destroyed, had these buildings been more contiguous.

The Capitol is admirably situated on an ascent called *Capitol Hill.* The name of Capitol associates the noblest ideas in the mind. It has a *Roman* sound! In our enthusiasm we behold *Virtue* and *Freedom,* which, alas! have been so long extinct, again descending from heaven, and fixing their abode in the western world.

Between the Capitol and President's house, there has been dug a well, which suddenly overflowed, continues to overflow, and will probably for ever overflow. The proprietor of the well informed me, that having dug it about eleven feet deep, and five and a half in diameter, the water rose with impetuosity, and increased the diameter to ten feet. He afterwards sounded with a plummet, and found it had sunk another foot. It had continued to overflow without remission, and runs into the woods across the road before the house. This wonder-working well brought the idle in crouds to behold it; and though it had scarcely been dug a month the man who shewed it to the gazing multitude, made no scruple to affirm, that it was not only the astonishment of *America,* but also of *Europe!*

The *Eastern Branch* of the *Potomac* is a tributary stream to it; and nature by their confluence invites the building of a city. The *Eastern Branch,* at its junction with the *Potomac,* Page Forty-five vies with it in breadth; but in tracing it to its source, this mighty mouth diminishes; and, at *Bladensburgh,* to cross its rustic bridge, the wheels of a carriage have not many revolutions to undergo.

It has been asserted by a late Traveller, that the Tiber, which supplies the city of *Washington* with water, received that name either from the *Indians,* or the first locators of the land; and hence is prophesied the magnificence of the city, which at some future day is to be a second *Rome.*

Of the erroneousness of this observation, accident one day convinced me. Having breakfasted at *George-town,* (it was at *Mac Glaughflin's* hotel), with a lively young

Frenchman, I proposed a walk to the Capitol. In our progress through the houseless streets of the Imperial city, the excessive heat of the sun provoked thirst, and to allay it we retired into the woods, and seated ourselves by the *Tiber.* The Capitol was within view. *Voilà,* said my companion, pointing to the edifice— *Voilà un Capitol sans Ciceron; et voici* (turning his finger towards the stream) *voici le Tibre sans Rome.*

Are you sure, Monsieur, said I, that you call this stream by its right name? Is there not some other for it?

My companion shrugged his shoulders, and said he could not tell.

At this juncture a groupe of negro boys and girls came to the stream, and filled their pitchers and pails.

I addressed them severally.

How you call this little river, my fine fellow?

You stranger, Mossa?

Yes.

Goose-Creek, Mossa.

After this let us hear no more far-fetched stories about the *Tiber;* but be content with the simple truth, that the first settlers of the contiguous lands conferred on it the name of Goose-Creek.12

Of *Goose-Creek,* (or, more magnificently, the *Tiber*), the water is excellent; and it is in contemplation to collect it in a grand reservoir, near the Capitol, and supply the houses with it by the means of pipes; while the superfluous water Page Forty-six will form a variety of fanciful cascades, delighting the eye, and refreshing the air.

Let me now come to the object of my journey to *Washington.* The politeness of a member from *Virginia,* procured me a convenient seat in the Capitol; and an hour after, Mr. *Jefferson* entered the House, when the august assembly of *American* Senators rose to receive him. He came, however, to the House without ostentation. His dress was of plain cloth, and he rode on horseback to the Capitol without a single guard, or even servant in his train, dismounted without assistance, and hitched the bridle of his horse to the palisades.

Never did the Capitol wear a more animated appearance than on the fourth day of *March,* 1801. The Senate-Chamber was filled with citizens from the remotest places of the Union. The planter, the farmer, the mechanic and merchant, all seemed to catch one common transport of enthusiasm, and welcome the approach of the Man to the chair of Sovreign Authority, who had before served his country in various offices of dignity; who had sat in the famous Congress that produced the Revolution, acted as Governor to his native State, and been Minister Plenipotentiary to a foreign nation.

Mr. *Jefferson,* having taken the oaths to the Constitution, with a dignified mien, addressed the august assembly of Senators and Representatives.

When I had heard the speech of Mr. *Jefferson,* there was nothing more to detain me among the scattered buildings of the desert.

Washington, on my second journey to it, [July, 1801], wore a very dreary aspect. The multitude had gone to their homes, and the inhabitants of the place were few. There were no objects to catch the eye, but a forlorn pilgrim forcing his way through the grass that overruns the streets; or a cow ruminating on a bank, from whose neck depended a bell that the animal might be found the more readily in the woods.

I obtained accommodations at the *Washington tavern,* Page Forty-seven which stands opposite the Treasury. At this tavern I took my meals at the public table, where there

was every day to be found a number of clerks, employed at the different offices under Government; together with about half a dozen *Virginians,* and a few *New England* men. There was a perpetual conflict of opinions between these southern and northern men; and one night, after supper, I was present at a vehement dispute, which terminated in the loss of a horse, a saddle, and bridle. The dispute was about Dr. *Franklin;* the man from *New England,* enthusiastic in what related to *Franklin,* asserted that, the Doctor being self-taught, was original in every thing he ever published. * * * * *

At the *Washington* tavern I found seven *Cherokee Chiefs,* who had attended the President's levee on the 4th of July; they came to be instructed in the mode of *European* agriculture.

Of this circumstance Mr. *Jefferson* speaks in his Message to Congress: “I am happy to inform you, that the continued “efforts to introduce among our *Indian* neighbours, the implements “and practice of husbandry, and of the household “arts, have not been without success: that they are become “more and more sensible of the superiority of this dependance “for clothing and subsistence, over the precarious resources “of hunting and fishing: and already we are able to “announce that, instead of that constant diminution of their “numbers produced by their wars and their wants, some of “them begin to experience an increase of population.”

* * * *

Finding a schooner at *George-town* ready to sail for Alexandria, I put my trunk on board of her, and left without regret the *Imperial City,* where I had encountered only disappointment.

The wind being contrary, we had to work down the *Potomac* —The river here is very beautiful. *Mason's Island* forms one continued garden; but what particularly catches the eye is the Capitol, rising with sacred majesty above the woods.

Our boat turned well to windward, and in an hour we landed at the *Widow Bull's* house, which may be considered Page Forty-eight half way to *Alexandria.* Here having quaffed and smoked together under the shade of a spreading locust tree, we once more committed ourselves to the waters of the *Potomac.*

It was easier landing at *Alexandria* in *America,* than *Alexandria* in *Egypt;* and I found elegant accommodations at *Gadesby's* hotel. It is observable that Gadesby keeps the best house of entertainment in the United States. The splendour of *Gadesby's* hotel not suiting my finances, I removed to a public-house kept by a *Dutchman.*

* * * * *

Having amused myself a few days at the imperial city, I rose with the sun, and pursued my journey along the banks of the *Potomac.* About nine in the morning I reached the bridge at the *Little Falls.* Near the bridge at the *Little Falls* my journey was suspended by the rain. * *

I now ascended a hill that led to the *Great Falls,* and on a sudden my steps were suspended by the conflict of elements, the strife of nature. I beheld the course of a large river abruptly obstructed by rocks, over which it was breaking with a tremendous roar; while the foam of the water seemed ascending to the clouds, and the shores that confined it to tremble at the convolution. I gazed for some time in silent awe at this war of elements, when having recovered from my admiration, I could not help exclaiming to the Great Maker of Heaven and of Earth, “Lord, What is man that thou art mindful of him.”

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NOTES.

1 *The Tontine Coffee House.* See Wansey's *Journal,* pp. 73–74:—

“Boston is the Bristol, New York the Liverpool, and Philadelphia the London of America. The Tontine tavern and coffee-house [at New York] is a handsome large brick building;

you ascend six or eight steps under a portico, into a large public room, which is the Stock Exchange of New York, where all bargains are made. Here are two books kept, as at Lloyds, of every ship's arrival and clearing out. This house was built for the accommodation of the merchants, by Tontine shares of two hundred pounds each. You can lodge and board there at a common table, and you pay ten shillings currency a day, whether you dine out or not. No appearance of shop windows as in London; only stores, which make no shew till you enter the houses. House rent is very dear; a hundred pounds sterling is a very usual price for a common storekeeper."

2 *Savage River.* See Dr. Morse's *Gazetteer* [Ed. 1797]:—

Savage, a small river of Maryland, which runs southward through Alleghany co. and empties into the Patowmack. Its mouth is 21 miles south-west of Fort Cumberland and 48 south-east of the mouth of Cheat river. Boats carrying 10 tons can reach Alexandria in 4 or 5 days, but will take double the time to return.

3 *Youghiogany* [Yohogany].

See Dr. Morse:— From the falls, where it intersects the Laurel Mountains, to Fort Cumberland is 40 miles of a very mountainous road.

4 *Cumberland.* See Michaux, *Travels to the Westward of the Allegany Mountains,* 1802. London, 1805. p. 205:—

"In the United States the name of Cumberland is given to that part of Tennessee which lies west of the mountains of that name."

5 *Cheat River.* See Dr. Morse:—

Cheat River Joins Monongahela River 3 or 4 miles within the Pennsylvania line. Is 200 yards wide at its mouth, and 100 at the Dunkard's Settlement, 50 miles higher. There is a portage of 37 miles from this R. to the Patowmack at the mouth of Savage River.

6 *Trade of the great lakes.* See Jefferson's *Notes,* 2d American Ed., Philadelphia, 1794. p. 18 ff.:—

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“There will therefore be a competition between the Hudson and Patowmac rivers for the residue of the commerce of all the country westward of Lake Erie, on the waters of the lakes, of the Ohio, and upper parts of the Mississippi * * * * The Patowmac offers itself under the following circumstances * * * * But the channel to New-York is already known to practice; whereas the upper waters of the Ohio and the Patowmac, and the great falls of the latter, are yet to be cleared of their fixed obstructions.”

7 *On the high road from Kentucky.* See Michaux, p. 155 ff.:—

“The merchants of Lexington carry on almost all the commerce of Kentucky: they receive their merchandize from Philadelphia and Baltimore in thirty five or forty days. Seven tenths of the fabricated articles consumed in Kentucky, as well as in the rest of the United States, are imported from England * * * I may add that there is not any species of territorial product in Kentucky, with the exception of Gensing, the value of which will pay for its conveyance by land from this State to Philadelphia; for it is proved that twenty five pounds weight would cost more for the carriage in this way, even with going up the Ohio, than a thousand weight by way of the river, without reckoning the passage by sea; although there are frequent examples of the voyage from New Orleans to Philadelphia or New York being sometimes as long as that from France to the United States.”

8 *From Pittsburgh to New Orleans.* See Michaux, p. 74 ff.:—

“The merchandize is conveyed from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh in large covered waggons, drawn by four horses, harnessed two and two * * The carrying boats [to New Orleans] generally require, in the spring, from forty five to fifty days to perform this passage, which two or three persons in a light vessel (pirogue) can accomplish in twenty or twenty five days * * * It is only in the spring [from the end of February, for three months] and autumn [Oct. 1st—Dec. 31st] that the Ohio is navigable, at least above Limestone;” i. e., from a point some fifty miles above Cincinnati.

9 *The grand emporium of the West.* See Melish, Travels through the United States of America in the years 1806, 1807, &c. Philadelphia, 1815. pp. 198–199:—

“The Potomac is one of the most important of the Atlantic rivers, and from its intersecting the country in a central situation, has excited great attention in the United States: more especially since Washington was fixed on as the seat of the general government. * * * The Potomac *can be made* [italics supplied] fit for boat navigation to Cumberland * * * Connected with this important subject, I may here notice, that a road has been laid out by order of congress, from Fifty-one Cumberland across the mountains to Brownsville on the Monongahela, a distance of 72 miles.”

10 *Captain Williamson of Genesee.* See Duke of La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, Vol. I, p. 135:—

“Captain Williamson has now nearly put the finishing stroke to his great undertaking. Next autumn he proposes to sail for England, and to return the following spring with a choice assemblage of horses, cattle, and sheep, of the best breeds he can obtain, and a collection of models of all implements of agriculture * * * * Captain Williamson is here universally respected, honoured, and beloved.”

11 *The price of flour.* See Duke of La Rochefoucauld, Vol. II, pp. 22, 37, 91:—

In the summer of 1796 this traveller found the price of flour $15 at Yorktown, and $11 at Staunton, (Virginia). At Richmond the price was $10. Around the year 1796 all prices fluctuated greatly, but these items are enough to show what the transportation conditions were at that time.

12 *Goose Creek.* The wild goose, like the Buffalo, has become scarce. The author's pleasantry suggested to Moore the lines cited by Warden:

‘And what was *Goose-Creek* once, is Tiber now,’ &c.

Warden, *A Chorographical and Statistical Description of the District of Columbia.* Paris. 1816, p. 32.

APPENDIX.

I. Henry Wansey, F. A. S., [1752–1827], in middle life retired from business, as a manufacturer of cloth, and devoted his time to travel, literature, and antiquarian research. He was a member of the Bath and West of England Agricultural Society and in 1791 published a volume “Wool Encouraged without Exportation.” He lived at Salisbury towards the end of his life, and spent much time in the preparation of the History of the Hundred of Warminster (his birthplace) contained in the *History of Wiltshire.* It is to be regretted that Wansey was not longer in this country. He was a painstaking collector of facts, made it a business to talk with everybody, and his memoranda have a Pepys flavor.

II. Isaac Weld, [1774–1856], was born in Dublin, and was at school in England, where he knew the Martineau family. The information contained in his *Travels* in this country was gathered by him between his twenty first and his twenty third year. The book was first published in 1799, went through several editions, and was translated into several foreign

languages. He was distinguished in the field of Irish Statistical Topography, and at the time of his death had been many years Vice President of the Royal Dublin Society.

III. Francis Baily, F. R. S. [1774–1844], was born in Berkshire, and as a boy knew Dr. Priestley. He was a very young man when he made his trip to this country, and he took an adventurous journey—to Pittsburg, down the Ohio to New Orleans, and back by land to Knoxville. His notes have not been published, or were lost, beyond Knoxville. In 1799 he became a stock broker in London, and made a fortune, retiring from business in 1825. He early became an authority on the theory of annuities and life insurance. But Fifty-three he was especially known as a student of astronomy, reviser of star catalogues, and reformer of the Nautical Almanac. He was one of the founders of the Royal Astronomical Society, and for years its President. His most important work was a repetition of the Cavendish Experiment for measuring the density of the earth.

IV. Duke of La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, [1747–1827], was early in the army. In 1769 he went to England and made a particular study of the new agriculture there. He returned to France and established a model farm on his estate, and also a technical school for the sons of soldiers. He was an influential member of the Constituent Assembly, but on being compelled to quit France came to this country, and put together the best book of that time descriptive of the United States. He was active in public affairs in France after the Revolution, did much to get vaccination established, and organized the first savings bank.

V. John Davis of Salisbury is not mentioned in the biographical dictionaries. His book of Travels in this country, as a book largely of impressions without any statistics worth mentioning, is for that period unique. Davis was a wanderer. He had been in the East Indies before coming to this country. He wrote and published two novels while in the United States, and was tutor in several families, in New York, Virginia, and South Carolina.

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